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Aug. '21

Copy of letter from the Secretary of Agriculture
to Hon. G. N. Haugen, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
House of Representatives, expressing the Department's views on
bill H. R. 5823 (S.1452).

Department of Agriculture,
Washington, June 21, 1921.

Hon. G. N. Haugen,
Chairman Committee on Agriculture,
House of Representatives.

Dear Mr. Haugen:

I am in receipt of your letter of May 31, inviting my attention to a bill, H. R. 5823, "Providing for establishing shooting grounds for the public, for establishing game refuges and breeding grounds, for protecting migratory birds, and requiring a Federal license to hunt them," and requesting an expression of opinion concerning it.

According to the terms of this bill, it proposes to accomplish two main objects:

First: The purchase, or rental, and maintenance of marsh and water areas especially suitable for migratory wild fowl, which shall be used as free public shooting grounds in the open hunting season and safeguarded as breeding and resting places for these birds in the close season.

Second. The administration of the migratory bird treaty act in order to more adequately maintain and increase the supply of migratory birds, including not only the ducks, geese, and others classed as game, but the great host of smaller species which are so vitally essential to the agricultural interests of the country through their unceasing war on injurious insects.

The bill provides the means for carrying out its purposes through a fund to be created from the proceeds of a Federal hunting license fee of \$1 a year, to be paid by each person who hunts migratory game birds. It is not possible to ascertain definitely the number of hunters who would take out Federal licenses for this purpose, but it would probably be between one and two millions. The money to be used for increasing the supply of migratory game birds and perpetuating wild-fowl hunting in the United States would be contributed by the hunters of migratory game birds, the people most directly benefited thereby, thus relieving the Government from appropriating a considerable sum each year, amounting for the fiscal year 1922 to more than \$154,900 for the administration of the migratory bird treaty act, the Lacey Act, and the Federal bird reservations.

The provisions in this bill whereby the licenses are to be made available to the public through the post offices throughout the country utilize governmental machinery already established, thus avoiding the excessive cost of setting up a new service. This not only provides economy and effectiveness of administration but should be a highly appreciated convenience to the public.

The bill also confers the police powers necessary to its enforcement, and the penalty clauses are carefully drawn. It is important that these features of the bill be retained. The birds must be protected on the refuges and the public shooting grounds effectively administered if the desired results are to be obtained. The provisions of the bill along this line are quite similar to those found in the migratory bird treaty act and are well adapted for the vigorous enforcement of a statute of this character.

The clauses in the bill providing for investigations and publication of information relative to birds will meet a necessary requirement for intelligent conservation and increase of migratory birds.

The present appropriation for the administration of the migratory bird treaty act provides for less than 30 full-time wardens to enforce the law throughout the 48 States and Alaska, an obviously inadequate force to cover such a vast territory. In 1920 the State of New York alone had a force of 145 game wardens; Pennsylvania, 110; Michigan, 97; and California, 78, to enforce their game laws, as against 28 Federal wardens in the entire United States to enforce the migratory bird treaty act. The fund resulting from the establishment of a Federal hunting license, as provided in this bill, would end this embarrassment and enable the department to meet the insistent and growing demand for adequate warden service.

Reports received by the department from all parts of the country agree that the alarming decrease of migratory wild fowl which preceded the negotiation of the migratory bird treaty and the passage of the act by Congress for the protection of migratory birds has changed to a marked increase. These reports show a cumulative increase not only in such migratory wild fowl as ducks, geese, and other game birds, but also of many insect-eating birds. Good evidence of the increase of migratory wild fowl under the migratory bird treaty act is contained in the report of the State game warden of Minnesota that during the hunting season of 1919 about 1,800,000 wild ducks were killed in that State. The meat value of these birds undoubtedly exceeded \$2,000,000. This indicates the economic advantage to the country at large to be derived in food value alone from the enactment of this bill. It is evident that the carrying out of the proposed conservation program under the Federal hunting license law would increase the total value of migratory wild fowl taken by hunters each year in the United States by millions of dollars, in addition to insuring the perpetuation of this valuable natural resource.

It is generally acknowledged that even with the inadequate sums available for enforcing the migratory bird treaty act the successful outcome of this great conservation measure has become apparent more promptly than was anticipated by its friends. Thus the passage of the migratory bird treaty act constituted the first important step toward insuring the perpetuation of our wild fowl and our wild-fowl hunting. Another step of almost equally vital importance if we are to hold what we have gained remains to be taken. This is provided for in the present bill and consists of the conservation and perpetuation of a sufficient number of small inland lakes, as well as inland and coastal swamp and marsh areas, to provide our migratory wild fowl necessary feeding, resting, and breeding places within the United States.

The bill provides for the use of not less than 45 per cent of the funds obtained from Federal hunting licenses for the purchase or rental and maintenance of suitable breeding places and feeding grounds for wild fowl to be used as public shooting grounds in the open season. It is absolutely necessary that not only during the breeding season, but during their migrations and in winter wild fowl have necessary places in which to live. There is no question that vast areas of swamp land in Alaska and northern Canada will in the indefinite future supply abundant breeding places for innumerable wild fowl. The maintenance of suitable homes for these birds while in the United States owing to activity in draining operations is becoming more and more precarious and their entire future is seriously threatened.

This part of the bill, although primarily intended to increase the number of wild fowl and to perpetuate wild-fowl hunting really involves a number of other important factors of definite advantage to the public. The mistaken idea is prevalent that the drainage of practically all water or marsh areas is a public benefit. Experience has shown in numerous instances that drainage has resulted in destroying a water area with its varied uses and left in its place land of little or no value. A careful survey by qualified experts should be made in which the community values of the water areas should be considered before individual drainage projects are undertaken. Under proper conditions many lakes, ponds, swamps, and marsh areas will yield a distinctly larger return than would the same area drained for agricultural purposes. The development and utilization of all available products of such areas might be termed "water farming."

In addition to the returns from water areas in wild fowl, they may also yield the following products:

1. A valuable supply of food and game fish.
2. An annual return of furs from such fur bearers as the muskrats, skunks, and raccoons frequenting them.
3. The production in certain areas of grasses valuable for forage and for the manufacture of grass rugs, which has become a profitable industry; also, in suitable areas, the production of willow suitable for basketry and other purposes.
4. A natural ice supply.
5. A definite help in maintaining the underground water level which is frequently essential for the production of forest growth and other vegetation.
6. An invaluable help in holding back the run-off of flood waters, assisting in preventing excessive erosion, and other flood damage. There is little doubt that if shallow lakes and swamp areas along drainage ways are systematically drained, the danger of terrific floods and the enormous destruction of lives and property will be seriously increased. This effect of extensive drainage work deserves careful attention in view of its definite relation to the public welfare.

7. Many of the more attractive of such water areas lend themselves admirably for educational uses and to assist in interesting the people of the State in out-of-door recreation and in the natural resources of plant and animal life which are so important in supplying useful commodities.

There is, however, little question that the greatest benefit of all from the establishment of public hunting grounds through the enactment of the present law would be its contribution to the public welfare.

At the present time it is estimated that more than 6,000,000 people in the United States engage in hunting of one kind or another each year. The rapidly increasing drainage of marsh areas threatens the continuance of one of the most popular kinds of hunting, which will be perpetuated under the terms of the present bill. With the growing congestion of population and the unrest which such massing produces, the maintenance and development of opportunities for out-of-door recreation, such as is here contemplated, places this bill in the front rank among legislative measures bearing on the public welfare. Throughout the United States a very large proportion of the men who spend a certain period each year in hunting are undoubtedly among our most desirable citizens. Through their out-of-door recreations they develop their resourcefulness and maintain a physical and mental health which is of the utmost value in relation to their civic usefulness.

Under present conditions many of the most favorable marsh areas for wild-fowl shooting have been purchased and are being held by wealthy sportsmen as hunting clubs, thus curtailing opportunities for wild-fowl hunting by the general public. The growing absorption of such areas by hunting clubs has created much bitter criticism on the part of those who, through lack of means, are unable to enjoy such privileges. The enactment of the present bill and the establishment of public shooting grounds under its provisions would give the general public equally good shooting privileges with those had by the clubs, but without individual additional cost, and should completely obviate any cause for the antagonistic feeling on the part of the public now existing.

The purchase, or rental, and maintenance of public shooting grounds, as provided for in the present bill, would maintain for the benefit of residents in both country and town large opportunities for continued wild-fowl shooting that will be impossible in any other way. It might, in fact, be stated that it would provide Federal shooting clubs for the benefit of the general public at the nominal cost of a Federal hunting license of \$1 a year.

The bill is well drawn and offers a solution of the problem of raising adequate funds for migratory-bird protection and for the acquisition of public shooting grounds without the necessity of regular annual appropriations. Incidentally, if enacted, it will accomplish many other desirable objects, and, as a simple, practical conservation measure of great value, it has the approval of this department.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Henry C. Wallace, Secretary.

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Copy of letter from the Secretary of Agriculture
to Hon. G. N. Haugen, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
House of Representatives, expressing the Department's views on
bill H. R. 745 (S.2913).

Department of Agriculture,
Washington, March 29, 1924.

Hon. G. N. Haugen,
Chairman Committee of Agriculture,
House of Representatives.

Dear Mr. Haugen:

I have your letter of March 27 inclosing for consideration and comment copy of H. R. 745 providing "for the establishment of migratory-bird refuges to furnish in perpetuity homes for migratory birds, the establishment of public shooting grounds to preserve the American system of free shooting, the provision of funds for establishing such areas, and the furnishing of adequate protection for migratory birds."

According to the terms of this bill, it proposes to accomplish two main objects:

First: The purchase, or rental, and maintenance of marsh and water areas especially suitable for migratory waterfowl, some of which areas shall be used wholly or in part as free public shooting grounds in the open season, and all of which shall be perpetuated and safeguarded as breeding and resting places for these birds.

Second: The administration of the migratory bird treaty act in order to more adequately maintain and increase the supply of migratory birds, including not only the ducks, geese, and others classed as game, but the great host of smaller species which are so vitally essential to the agricultural interests of the country through their unceasing war on injurious insects.

The bill provides the means for carrying out its purposes through a fund to be created from the proceeds of a Federal hunting license fee of \$1 a year, to be paid by each person who hunts migratory game birds. It is not possible to ascertain definitely the number of hunters who would take out Federal licenses for this purpose, but it would probably be between one and two millions. The money to be used for increasing the supply of migratory game birds and perpetuating wild-fowl hunting in

the United States would be contributed by the hunters of migratory game birds, the people most directly benefited thereby, thus relieving the Government from appropriating a considerable sum each year, amounting for the fiscal year 1923 to more than \$145,000 for the administration of the migratory bird treaty act and the Lacey act.

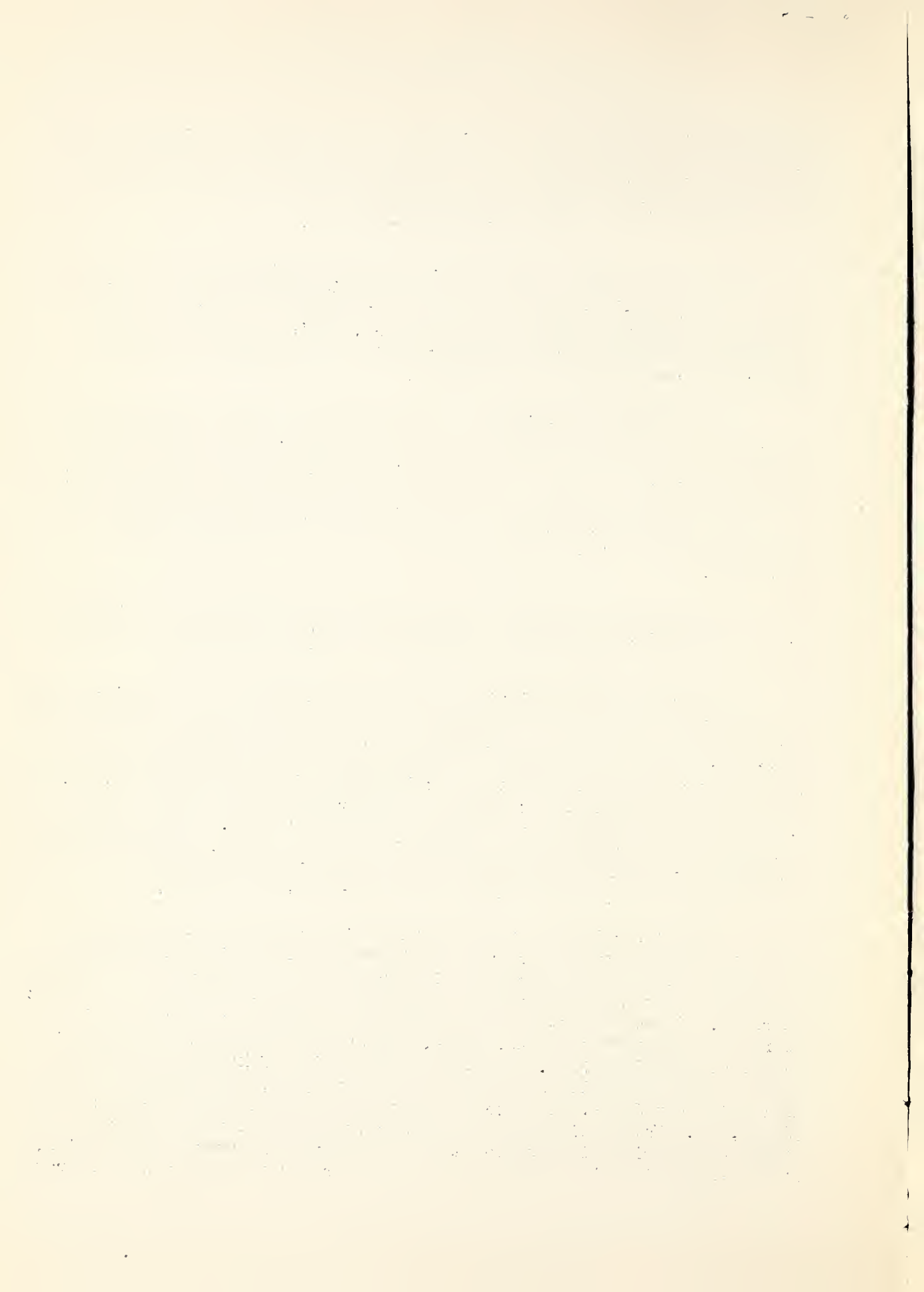
The provisions in this bill whereby the licenses are to be made available to the public through the post offices throughout the country utilize governmental machinery already established, thus avoiding the excessive cost of setting up a new service. This not only provides economy and effectiveness of administration but should be a highly appreciated convenience to the public.

The bill also confers the police powers necessary to its enforcement, and the penalty clauses are carefully drawn. It is important that these features of the bill be retained. The birds must be protected on the refuges and the public shooting grounds effectively administered if the desired results are to be obtained. The provisions of the bill along this line are quite similar to those found in the migratory bird treaty act and are well adapted for the enforcement of a statute of this character.

The clauses in the bill providing for investigations and publication of information relative to birds will meet a necessary requirement for intelligent conservation and increase of migratory birds.

The present appropriation for the administration of the migratory bird treaty act provides for only 25 full-time wardens to enforce the law throughout the 48 States and Alaska, an obviously inadequate force to cover such a vast territory. The State of New York alone has a force of 145 game wardens; Pennsylvania, 110; Michigan, 97; and California, 78, to enforce their game laws, as against 25 Federal wardens in the entire United States to enforce the migratory bird treaty act. The fund resulting from the establishment of a Federal hunting license, as provided in this bill, would end this embarrassment and enable the department to meet the insistent and growing demand for adequate warden service.

Reports received by the department from all parts of the country agree that the alarming decrease of migratory wild fowl which preceded the negotiation of the migratory bird treaty and the passage of the act by Congress for the protection of migratory birds has changed to a marked increase. These reports show a cumulative increase not only in such migratory wild fowl as ducks, geese, and other game birds, but also of many insect-eating birds. The State game warden of Minnesota reported that during the hunting season of 1919 about 1,800,000 wild ducks were killed in that State. The meat value of these birds undoubtedly exceeded \$2,000,000. This indicates the economic advantage to the country at large to be derived in food value alone from the enactment of this bill. It is evident that the carrying out of the proposed conservation program



under the Federal hunting license law would increase the total value of migratory wild fowl taken by hunters each year in the United States by millions of dollars, in addition to insuring the perpetuation of this valuable natural resource.

It is generally acknowledged that even with the inadequate sums available for enforcing the migratory bird treaty act the successful outcome of this great conservation measure has become apparent more promptly than was anticipated by its friends. Thus the passage of the migratory bird treaty act constituted the first important step toward insuring the perpetuation of our wild fowl and our wild-fowl hunting. Another step of almost equally vital importance if we are to hold what we have gained remains to be taken. This is provided for in the present bill and consists of the conservation and perpetuation of a sufficient number of small inland lakes, as well as inland and coastal swamp and marsh areas, to provide our migratory wild fowl necessary feeding, resting, and breeding places within the United States.

The bill provides for the use of not less than 45 per cent of the funds obtained from Federal hunting licenses for the purchase or rental and maintenance of suitable breeding places and feeding grounds for wild fowl to be used wholly or in part as public shooting grounds in the open season. It is absolutely necessary that not only during the breeding season, but during their migrations and in winter wild fowl have necessary places in which to live. There is no question that vast areas of swamp land in Alaska and northern Canada will in the indefinite future supply abundant breeding places for innumerable wild fowl. The maintenance of suitable homes for these birds while in the United States owing to activity in drainage operations is becoming more and more precarious and their entire future is seriously threatened.

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There is, however, little question that the greatest benefit of all from the establishment of public hunting grounds through the enactment of the present law would be its contribution to the public welfare.

At the present time it is estimated that more than 6,000,000 people in the United States engaged in hunting of one kind or another each year. The rapidly increasing drainage of marsh areas threatens the continuance of one of the most popular kinds of hunting, which will be perpetuated under the terms of the present bill. With the growing congestion of population and the unrest which such massing produces, the maintenance and development of opportunities for out-of-door recreation, such as is here contemplated, places this bill in the front rank among legislative measures bearing on the public welfare. Throughout the United States a very large proportion of the men who spend a certain period each year in hunting are undoubtedly among our most desirable citizens. Through their out-of-door recreations they develop their resourcefulness and maintain a physical and mental health which is of the utmost value in relation to their civic usefulness.

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The bill is well drawn and offers a solution of the problem of raising adequate funds for migratory-bird protection and for the acquisition of public shooting grounds without the necessity of regular annual appropriations. Incidentally, if enacted, it will accomplish many other desirable objects, and, as a simple, practical conservation measure of great value, it has the approval of this department.

A companion bill (S. 2913) has been introduced in the Senate, and I am addressing a similar letter to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, who has requested my views in regard thereto.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henry A. Wallace".

Secretary.

